

update

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Gabriel's

Missing Children's Organization

a 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to
helping families locate missing
and abducted children.

Internet Crimes

Against Children

Becomes a Growing

Concern as

77 Million Children

Access the Internet

This Year



To protect your children, monitor their Internet usage and educate them about the dangers awaiting them online. See page two for more information and Internet safety tips.



Birdies for Charity Campaign

Be a part of Gabriel's Gifts' Birdies for Charity Campaign. Use the enclosed entry form to make your pledge and guess the number of birdies that will be shot in this year's Shell Houston Open at Redstone Golf Club. Last year's winner drove home a brand new Buick Ranier. Return your pledge forms to Gabriel's Gifts by April 16.

Silent Auction Items Collected for 4th Annual Champagne Brunch



Don't forget! Our 4th Annual Champagne Brunch is fast approaching. This year we will honor Sheriff Tommy Thomas and the Harris County Sheriff's Office for their extraordinary concern for child safety. We are collecting some amazing silent auction items so join us on April 17th at Crapitto's Italian Cucina at 2400 Mid Lane from noon – 3:00 p.m. and don't miss out!

**Regional, State & National
Amber Alert News on page 3**

Regional, State & National Amber Alert News

Caveat Emptor

Let Buyer Beware, Even With Amber Alert Name!

January 13th marked the 9th anniversary of Amber Hagerman's abduction and murder, and as legitimate Amber Alert programs spread across the country, there were bound to be people looking to profit off the Amber Alert.

Recently we became aware of an organization called Preamberalert.com and took issue with them using "Amber Alert" in their name since they are not affiliated with any legitimate Amber Alert program.

Preamberalert.com is attempting to profit by charging parents \$39.95 to "pre-register" children for the Amber Alert. Not only is this unnecessary for issuing an Amber Alert, but it is overkill. The Amber Alert is an incredibly valuable tool in the recovery of an abducted child, but, thankfully, most families will never need it. Child abduction is rare. It may seem more prevalent now because of the increase in publicity, but the stereotypical abduction of a child is infrequent, around 115 children in the United States each year.

Here are just a few statements from the Preamberalert.com website:

1) "Figures show a 45% increase in child abductions for 2002-2003." If this were true, there would be a public outcry and many more Amber Alerts issued!

2) "Preamberalert.com is by far the best choice for child security." Huh? The best security for children is close supervision by trusted adults

and safety education. Keeping child predators in prison doesn't hurt either!

3) "Remember, the police send Amber Alerts to all the local TV stations. They must

To date, 195 children have been recovered due to Amber Alerts.

have a photograph in order to run the alert." This is not true. The photo is very important, but Amber Alerts are issued without delay even in the absence of a photo and media will, and do, air the alerts without the photo. It is important to maintain an easily accessible digital or regular photo of children. It takes only a minute to download a digital image or to scan a photo.

Here's just a sampling of what else I found in a brief search for "Amber Alert" on the internet:

Team Amber Alert bills itself as: "Team Amber® — The Net's Amber Alert System"

Code Amber bills itself as "Code Amber - The Web's Amber Alert System"

AmberAlert911.com reports "There are no active alerts" on the morning of February 22, 2005 and there were at least three: one in the D/FW area, one in Houston and one in Los Angeles.

City Amber: "Building, educating and bringing communities together."

AMBER Alert Net is a free public service of Webroot

Software, Inc. that extends the reaches of the current AMBER Alert program beyond road signs, radio and TV to the Internet. This service is available to all Internet-connected computer users with no subscription fee or product purchase attached. Information contained in AMBER Alert Net will contain official AMBER Alert text as it is issued by law enforcement and will be updated accordingly.

National Amber Alerts Center bills itself as "Only web based AMBER ALERTS

SYSTEM to give you direct e-mail alerts to help find the missing children." Both the Houston Regional Amber Plan and the Texas Amber Alert Network provide Amber Alerts via email to subscribers.

For the most up-to-date, accurate information on all of the legitimate Amber Plan systems around the country visit the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children at www.missingkids.org and select "Amber Alert" on the left menu.



Sgt. Darrin Buse, Houston Police Department Missing Person Division, logs onto the secure Amber Plan website during training.

Training Sessions Set for 2005

The Houston Regional Amber Plan Training schedule has been set for 2005. All classes are held in the Chase Bank Building at 6330 W Loop South at Bissonnet in the third floor training room from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Remaining 2005 dates: April 13, May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10, September 14, October 12 and November 9. All law enforcement agencies within the 13-county Amber Plan Region (Austin, Chambers, Colorado, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, and Wharton counties) are invited to send officers. Call Beth Alberts @ 713.521.2694 or email her at balberts@mrchouston.com for registrations.

Sexual Predator's New Playground Spans World

by Kim Dougan

As we prepared for, and moved into, the new millennium, sexual predators took up residence in their new playground — a playground that spans the world. So, like the rest of the world, the Internet has become a dangerous place for children to play unattended.

According to The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a study of 1,501 teens and preteens found that one in five received a sexual solicitation over the Internet in 1999, with less than 10% reporting the incident to authorities. Because this study was conducted over five years ago and relies on the self-reporting of teenagers, it may not be representative of the current situation. Based on my own experiences as a teen and preteen on the Internet several years ago, I believe the occurrence of sexual solicitations over the Internet is grossly underreported. Adults do not make all of these

solicitations. Some are made by other teens, but there are more than enough adults involved to warrant a full-scale counter attack.

Some of the most disturbing statistics I found are from a study conducted between October 2001 and July 2002 by the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. This limited study was conducted through telephone interviews with local, state, and federal law enforcement investigators who had worked on cases involving sexual offenses against juvenile victims that originated with online encounters and ended in arrests. Seventy-five percent of victims were girls between 13 and 15 years old, and 76% of the offenders were over 25 years old. Seventy-five percent of offenders initially met their victims in a chat room, but only 13% of initial contacts were at a sexually oriented chat room or site. Sixty-four percent of offenders

communicated online with their victims for more than a month. Seventy-nine percent also talked by telephone, 48% sent pictures to the victim, and 47% gave or offered money or gifts to the victim. This survey revealed that, contrary to public belief, there is a generally an absence of deception leading to the offenses; only 5% of offenders claimed to be a peer of the victim. They represented themselves as being younger than 18 years old, and some of these admitted their true age before meeting the victim. Most of the offenders were open about their sexual motives; only 21% hid or misrepresented their motives. Offenders were most commonly deceptive concerning their promises of love and romance; half of the victims said that they were in love with, or felt close to, the offender. Thirteen to fifteen year olds tend to be very curious about or interested in sexual information or material. It is important to remember that, just because these children weren't as deceived as people believe, they were still victims. They are indeed children and don't have the maturity or capacity to be good judges of character. Frank discussions between parents, health care workers or educators, and children need to begin early in order to aid this population in being less vulnerable to Internet predators.

Up-to-date and comprehensive studies on the age-old epidemic of missing children, and the more recent problem of Internet-initiated abductions are unavailable

because the issues are so complex. Statistics on automobile theft are more readily available than statistics on the disappearance of our nation's children.

Ways to help protect your child from Internet predators:

Learn about the Internet.

After you've learned a little, ask your kids to show you some of their favorite websites. Know what your children are doing on the Internet.

Place the computer in a common room where supervision can be provided. Make sure the screen isn't hidden from the rest of the room.

Talk to your children about the dangers of the Internet and the ramifications of giving out personal information.

Consider installing a program that blocks or filters inappropriate material and monitor's a user's activity. Gabriel's Gifts is an affiliate of one such software company. If you order Net Nanny 5 through the Gabriel's Gifts website, we receive 30% of the proceeds.

For more Internet safety tips, visit these websites. Most have separate areas for parents and children, as well as a listing of kid-safe websites.

www.ala.org/ala/also/greatwebsites/greatwebsiteskids.htm

www.netsmartz.org

www.netmom.com

www.wiredsafety.org

www.protectkids.com

www.websafecrackerz.org

Scotch Club Presents Check



McCormick and Schmick Manager Jay Brown presents a check for \$1,600 representing the proceeds of Scotch Club events benefiting Gabriel's Gifts Missing Children's Organization to CEO, Beth Alberts.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

April is our single biggest outreach month! Please help! Sign-up on our online volunteer system at www.gabrielsgifts.org/vol-signup.asp. Complete the registration form and you will receive email notification of all volunteer activities.



House Beautiful Show: Friday, April 1st-Sunday, April 3rd at the Reliant Center, Halls A-B. Volunteers are needed to produce laminated, photo ID cards and distribute child safety information.

Shell Houston Open: the annual Pro golf tournament will be



held at Redstone Country Club in Humble, April 20-24th. Volunteers are needed to sell ice cream, lemonade and pretzels to raise funds for Gabriel's Gifts. All volunteers receive a shirt and free tickets to the event.

YMCA Healthy Kids Day at the MD Anderson YMCA at 705 Cavalcade and at the Northwest YMCA 1234 West 34th Street from 9am - 2pm. Distribute Child ID Kits and Child Safety Information. We will need volunteers to cover this event so please call Kim at 713.314.3646 if you can help or sign-up online.



Enterprise Rent-a-Car is sponsoring a Child ID Event in Westwood Mall.

Help us prepare laminated, photo Child ID cards and distribute child safety info at the Enterprise Rent-a-Car in Westwood Mall on April 9 from 10am - 3pm.

Did you know...

In 2004 there were:

- 59,911 missing child cases filed in Texas
- 11,874 missing child cases filed in the 13-county Houston-Galveston Region
- 8,956 missing child cases filed in Harris County
- 6,927 children still missing on December 31

Gabriel's

G I F T S
Missing Children's Organization

DONOR FORM

Yes, I want every child to be safe.

Name _____ Company (if applicable) _____

Mailing Address: Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Please accept my gift of: \$ _____ This donation is in honor / memory of _____

Enclosed is a matching gift form from my company. _____

(check our website at www.gabrielsgifts.org to see if your employer matches contributions!)

I want to volunteer. Please call me. _____

Make check payable to Gabriel's Gifts

MasterCard VISA Discover

Card No. _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____ Amount \$ _____

CITY, STATE OR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

You can contribute to Gabriel's Gifts via payroll deduction by choosing our charity. Our numbers are:

2416
Houston's Combined Municipal Campaign

334163
State Employee Charitable Campaign

4140
Combined Federal Campaign

GABRIEL'S GIFTS

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All donations are tax deductible